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Viewing cable 09QUITO1033, Government Commission Report on Colombian Attack and FARC

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09QUITO1033**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09QUITO1033	2009-12-11 18:45	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Quito

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.eluniverso.com/2011/04/11/1/1355/cable-239530.html>

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #1033/01 3451845
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 111845Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0545
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 001033

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2029/12/11

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [MOPS](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: Government Commission Report on Colombian Attack and FARC
Ties

REF: QUITO 933; QUITO 227

CLASSIFIED BY: Heath...

id: 239530
date: 12/11/2009 18:45
refid: 09QUITO1033
origin: Embassy Quito
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination: 09QUITO227|09QUITO933
header:
VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #1033/01 3451845
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 111845Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0545
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 001033

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2029/12/11
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [MOPS](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: Government Commission Report on Colombian Attack and FARC
Ties

REF: QUITO 933; QUITO 227

CLASSIFIED BY: Heather M. Hodges, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(D)

11. (C) Summary: A government-appointed commission's report revives allegations about the FOL's support (specifically in regard to satellite intelligence) for the 2008 Colombian military attack against a FARC camp in northern Ecuador, as well as allegations of inappropriate U.S. direction of local intelligence services and police units. We would not be surprised if the GOE seeks to overcome its current political weakness by playing up the report's criticism of the U.S., which was harsher than we were led to expect in November (Ref A). Concerns about the influence of the FARC and narcotics traffickers in Ecuador are a secondary theme of the report, but initially have equally captured local press attention. The report reviews, but does not reach conclusions on, allegations that former Security Minister Larrea, National Assembly member Calle, and others have ties to the FARC. End Summary.

12. (C) The government appointed the Transparency and Truth Commission to look into the Colombian military operation of March 1, 2008, against a FARC camp in northern Ecuador (reftels). The commission's 130-page report makes a total of 88 references to the USG, most of which do not cast us in a favorable light. It highlights the refusal of Colombian authorities to provide information. Interestingly, the report admits that it does not seek to be objective, rather to enhance transparency, and that

often it cannot draw conclusions on issues due to lack of access by the Commission.

FOL, DEA, and CIA are Major Targets

13. (C) The role of the U.S. Forward Operating Location (FOL) in Manta is a major focus of the commission's report. The report accepts the Ambassador's statement in a July letter to the commission that FOL aircraft were not involved in the March 2008 Colombian military operation. However, it charges that FOL-based satellite intelligence was fundamental in locating FARC leader Raul Reyes, who was killed in the FARC camp. The report points to an HC-130 aircraft that it says unusually flew at night on February 29 - March 1 carrying a container with unknown contents. It suggests that a third country was involved in the Colombian operation, arguing that the GBU 12 Paveway bomb could not be launched from the Super Tucano aircraft the Colombians used. The report itself contradicts this three paragraphs later where it states that the websites consulted indicate the Super Tucanos do have the capability to drop such bombs. The report also criticizes the 1999 agreement allowing U.S. use of the FOL for not having been approved in accordance with legal norms, namely ratification by the Congress.

14. (SBU) The report describes what it calls an unacceptable operational dependence on external agencies by the Special Investigations Unit (UIES) of the Ecuadorian police. It claims that the UIES blocked information from reaching certain officials at senior levels and from President Correa. The report charges that anti-drug agencies followed DEA and CIA priorities rather than those of the Ecuadorian government and did not always use legal methods.

15. (C) Support for the Correa administration is currently the weakest it has been during his presidency. In three recent polls, respondents' positive ratings of President Correa's performance declined to 58, 42, and 39 percent. Given this weakness, the GOE may well decide to seize on the criticism of the USG in the commission's report to distract attention from other national

problems that have affected its popularity, such as unemployment, crime, corruption, and electricity outages.

16. (C) The final report was more prejudicial to U.S. interests than we had expected, given what commission member Walter Gellibert Larreta told us in early November (Ref A). When we asked Gellibert on December 11 about this contrast, he claimed that the commission member who drafted the FOL section, Israel Batista of the Latin American Council of Churches, had included what Gellibert called unsubstantiated allegations, e.g., that a FOL aircraft was involved in carrying out the attack on the FARC camp, but other commission members made him take those statements out.

Concerns about FARC and Narco-Trafficker Influence

17. (C) The report questions the channels of communication through which military and police intelligence reported information on the bombing to civilian authorities. It states that "there are indications of inability, corruption and failures in military and

police protocol" in authorities' failures to do more to combat the FARC and narco-traffickers. The report also questions why the Ecuadorian government did not act on information about Raul Reyes' movements and places he frequented to attempt his capture, and why foreign visitors to the FARC camp prior to the bombing were not detected.

¶8. (C) The commission's report reviews possible ties to the FARC of a number of former government officials and other individuals: former Coordinating Minister for Internal and External Security Gustavo Larrea, former Government Ministry Under Secretary Jose Ignacio Chauvin, former Ambassador to Venezuela and retired general Rene Vargas Pazzos, National Assembly member Maria Augusta Calle, lawyer Luis Rubio Gallegos, and retired colonel Jorge Brito. The report provides detailed information of the activities of these individuals, but does not reach any conclusions about alleged ties to the FARC and/or narco-trafficking. Instead it refers the matter to judicial authorities for investigation. It states that all of the individuals above denied any knowledge of the military and ideological objectives of the February 2008 Bolivarian Continental Congress, which was held in Quito.

Conclusions and Recommendations

¶9. (C) The majority of the report's conclusions and recommendations are unfavorable to the U.S. Among them are:

- The FOL was key to locating FARC leader Raul Reyes.
- FOL activities exceeded its stated mission of counternarcotics.
- The violation of national sovereignty of other countries cannot be justified by any judicial doctrine.

¶10. (C) Several other conclusions/recommendations, however, are on the mark:

- Narco-trafficking and related activities are of such magnitude that combating them should involve the entire nation.
- The justice system has failed to determine who is responsible for narco-trafficking operations.
- The lack of control of precursor chemicals has allowed the country to start to be a processing site, in addition to serving for transit.
- The FARC and narcotrafficking have penetrated various the political, judicial, cultural, and social realms.
- The FARC had the capacity to develop its international relations strategy and spread its political project via the organization of the February 2008 Bolivarian congress.
- The state should guard its borders from foreign persons and groups.
- The free movement of people in the interior of the country should be regulated for reasons of national security.

Comment

¶11. (C) The anti-American bias of the government commission's report and its failure to judge those accused of FARC ties bear out the low expectations of many commentators at the time of its establishment. We do not see anything new in the charges against the USG, but rather a rehash of old allegations, which is not surprising given the commission's lack of access and expert staff. Government officials almost certainly influenced the report's conclusions, although we do not know to what extent.

HODGES

=====CABLE ENDS=====